

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ABU DH 01231 01 OF 02 270814Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 MCT-01 EUR-12 ARA-06 PM-04
NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00
/073 W

-----270900Z 008332 /12

R 270625Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5991
INFO AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ABU DHABI 1231

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, US, ET
SUBJ: ERITREANS REQUEST FOR DIALOGUE

1. EMBASSY RECEIVED PHONE CALL APRIL 25 FROM MR. OSMAN SALEH SABBE CLAIMING TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREAN LIBERATION GROUP AND ASKING TO SEE AMBASSADOR. WE RESPONDED THAT AMBASSADOR WAS OUT OF TOWN (WHICH WAS TRUE) BUT THAT HE WOULD BE BACK APRIL 26. SABBE STATED THAT HE WOULD BE LEAVING ABU DHABI THAT DATE AND ASKED IF HE COULD SEE ANYONE ELSE. DCM AGREED TO RECEIVE HIM.

2. WHEN SABBE MET WITH DCM HE IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS CHAIRMAN OF CENTRAL COUNCIL OF ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT (PEOPLE LIBERATION FORCES). HE SUBSEQUENTLY EXPLAINED THAT HIS ORGANIZATION WAS ONE OF TWO LAYING CLAIM TO ELF TITLE. HE LABELLED THE PLF WING AS "MODERATE AND NATIONALIST"; OTHER ELF GROUP WAS MIXTURE OF MODERATES AND LEFTISTS; AND THERE WAS THIRD SMALLER GROUP CALLED ERITREAN POPULAR FRONT WHICH DEFINITELY LEFTIST. HE STATED HE WAS IN UAE
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PAGE 02 ABU DH 01231 01 OF 02 270814Z

ON ONE OF FREQUENT VISITS HE MADE IN CONNECTION WITH FINANCIAL SUPPORT WHICH HE STATED UAEG WAS PROVIDING HIS GROUP. (LOCAL GOVERNMENT DAILY CARRIED LONG INTERVIEW WITH SABBE ON APRIL 22.)

3. SABBE CLAIMED TO HAVE HAD CONTACT IN 1975-76 IN BEIRUT WITH ONE "DR. JOSEPH" OF THE AMERICAN EMBASSY.

HE STATED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE FURTHER DIALOGUE WITH USG. HE DESCRIBED IN PREDICTABLE TERMS THREAT POSED BY RUSSIAN INFLUENCE IN ADDIS ABABA AND EQUALLY PREDICTABLY ARGUED THAT IT WOULD BE IN WESTERN INTERESTS IF HIS GROUP TRIUMPHED IN ERITREA. IF NOTHING ELSE THIS WOULD CUT ETHIOPIA OFF FROM RED SEA, SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCING IMPACT OF ANY SOVIET INFLUENCE WHICH MIGHT BE ACHIEVED THERE. MOREOVER, SABBE POINTED TO VARIETY OF TIES HIS GROUP HAD WITH OTHERS IN AREA, ALL OF WHICH COULD CONTRIBUTE TO WESTERN INTERESTS THERE. ON ONE HAND, YLF/PLF WAS GETTING SUPPORT FROM THOSE SUCH AS SUDAN AND OIL RICH ARAB STATES WHICH WERE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT POTENTIAL SOVIET INFLUENCE IN RED SEA AREA. HIS GROUP WAS ALSO TIED TO ETHIOPIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION (EDU) WHICH IN ARMED OPPOSITION TO GOVERNMENT IN ADDIS ABABA (HE CLAIMED EDU HOLDS THREE ETHIOPIAN TOWNS NEAR SUDANESE BORDER) AND WHICH HE CLAIMED REALLY REPRESENTS ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE AND FORCES OF MODERATION. FINALLY ELF/PLF HAD CLOSE TIES TO SOMALIA, WHICH SABBE NOTED WAS ALSO MUCH CONCERNED WITH EVENTS IN ETHIOPIA AND SOVIET ACTIONS THERE. SABBE OBSERVED THAT HIS GROUP COULD CONTRIBUTE TO CLOSER TIES BETWEEN SOMALIA AND US WHICH HE UNDERSTOOD WASHINGTON WAS SEEKING. IN SHORT, THERE WERE GROUPING OF FORCES IN ARYA INCLUDING HIS ERITREAN FACTION WORKING FOR OBJECTIVES BOTH OF INTERESTS OF PEOPLE OF THE AREA AS WELL AS IN INTERESTS OF WEST.

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PAGE 03 ABU DH 01231 01 OF 02 270814Z

4. IN TERMS OF WHAT HE HOPED TO ACHIEVE FROM DIALOGUE WITH USG, SABBE WAS SOMEWHAT VAGUE. ON ONE HAND, HE ARGUED THAT SIMPLY HAVING US UNDERSTANDING, EVEN WITHOUT DIRECT INVOLVEMENT COULD HELP A LOT. ON OTHER HAND, HE SPOKE OF NEED FOR JOINT PLAN OF ACTION IN THE AREA AND OF POSSIBLY HELPING UDU OVERTHROW PRESENT ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT IN NEXT SIX MONTHS BEFORE RUSSIAN INFLUENCE BECAME MORE ENTRENCHED. (SABBE ALSO MENTIONED CUBA AND STATED THAT HIS FORCES BELIEVED THERE WERE CUBAN PILOTS FLYING ETHIOPIAN PLANES AGAINST THEM). IN SHORT, IMPRESSION WAS THAT HE WOULD TAKE ALMOST ANY DEGREE OF SUPPORT HE COULD GET. FIRST STEP WAS TO DISCUSS SITUATION AS IT EXISTED. SABBE STATED HE PREPARED TO HOLD SUCH DISCUSSIONS ANYWHERE, INCLUDING WASHINGTON.

5. DIM'S RESPONSE WAS NON-COMMITAL. HE NOTED STRONG DISINCLINATION ON PART OF AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THEIR

REPRESENTATIVES IN BOTH EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE
BRANCHES TO GET INVOLVED IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF
FOREIGN COUNTRIES. EVENTS IN ETHIOPIA WERE, NATU-
RALLY, MATTER OF CONCERN--HIGHLIGHTED BY RECENT
ANNOUNCEMENT THAT NUMBER OF US INSTALLATIONS TO BE
CLOSED AND PERSONNEL EXPELLED. BUT CONCERN WAS ONE
THING, NATURE OF RESPONSE, IF ANY, WAS ANOTHER. DCM
DID UNDERTAKE TO REPORT SABBE'S APPROACH TO WASHING-
TON WITHOUT PREDICTING EITHER LIKELIHOOD OR POSSIBLE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ABU DHABI 1231

NATURE OF RESPONSE. SABBE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION.
HE PROVIDED CONTACT POINT HERE IN ABU DHABI TO WHICH
MESSAGE COULD BE RELAYED. HE ALSO NOTED THAT HE
WOULD BE AT GULF HOTEL IN DOHA FOR THREE DAYS AND,
AFTER FEW DAYS IN KUWAIT, WOULD BE PROCEEDING TO
JIDDA. HE SAID HIS GROUP HAD OFFICE IN JIDDA AS WELL
(PHONE 32288) HEADED BY OSMAN DANDAN WHOM HE SAID WAS
KNOWN TO EMBASSY JIDDA.

6. COMMENT: WE CLEARLY ARE IN NO POSITION TO PASS
JUDGEMENT ON MR. SABBE NOR DO WE SEE THIS EMBASSY
PLAYING ONGOING ROLE IN THIS AFFAIR. WE WILL OF COURSE
PASS ON MESSAGE TO OFFICE HERE IF THAT IS DESIRED,
BUT WE ASSUME RESPONSE, IF ANY, BETTER MADE BY THOSE
FAR MORE FAMILIAR THAN WE WITH EVENTS IN AND USG
POLICY TOWARDS ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA.
DICKMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL LEADERS, LIBERATION FRONTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 27-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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Errors: N/A
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Status: NATIVE
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TAGS: PFOR, US, ET, TC, ELF, (SABBE, OSMAN SALEH)
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